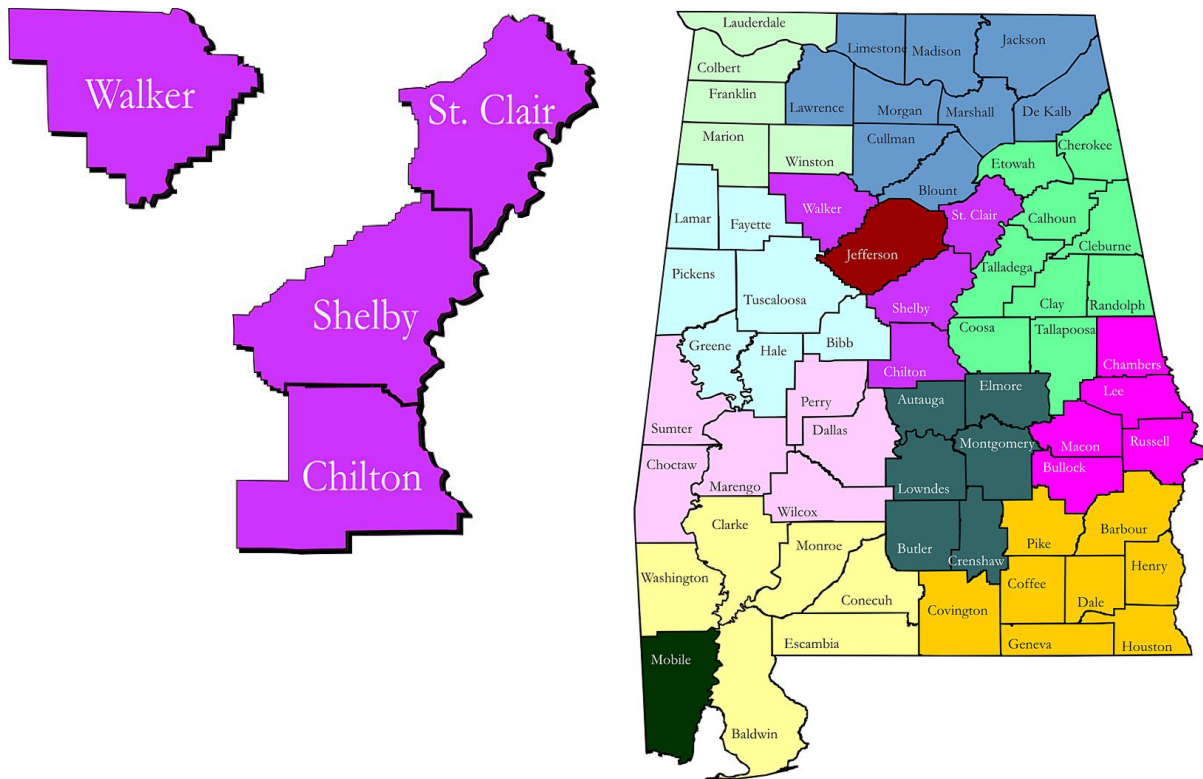


WIAA Region 4 Workforce Report



Summary

- Region 4 had a 3.2 percent unemployment rate in August 2005, with about 5,500 unemployed. However, the four-county region has a 47,600-strong available labor pool that is looking for better jobs and includes 42,100 underemployed workers. The underemployed are willing to commute farther and longer; for the one-way commute, 48 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 41 percent will go 20 or more extra miles.
- In 2000, about 71,540 residents commuted out of the region for work, compared to 30,140 in-commuters. Most commuters worked in Jefferson County, with nearly 50,000 coming from Shelby and St. Clair counties. Significant commuting within the region suggests that the roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers as impeded movement of workers can slow economic development.
- Educational attainment in the region is higher than for Alabama. Of the age 25 and over population, Alabama has 75 percent high school graduates and 19 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders, compared to 77 percent and 22 percent, respectively, for the region. Shelby County stands out with roughly 87 percent high school graduates and 37 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders.

- Employment is currently growing faster than the labor force. While this might reduce commuter outflow, it also presents a challenge to workforce development. Initiatives addressing this challenge should consider (i) focusing on hard-to-serve populations (e.g. out-of-school youth and illiterate adults), (ii) facilitating in-commuting, and (iii) helping communities gain new residents. Increasing population is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting. Communities in this region, except for Walker County, are experiencing rapid population growth. Hard-to-serve populations are often outside of the mainstream economy, poor, and have difficulty finding work, but are potential labor force participants. Investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap this resource.
- By sector, the top five employers in the region are retail trade, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, educational services, and accommodation and food services. These five industries provided 54,813 jobs, 51 percent of the region total in the second quarter of 2004. Of these leading employers, only manufacturing had higher average monthly wages than the \$2,850 regional average.
- On average about 6,270 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004; quarterly net job flows averaged 1,070. Job creation is the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or through expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.
- Seven occupations are both high-demand and fast-growing: Receptionists and Information Clerks; Teacher Assistants; Middle School Teachers; Elementary School Teachers; Secondary School Teachers; Bus Drivers, School; and Child Care Workers. The teaching occupations listed do not include special education. The top five high-demand occupations are Cashiers; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Retail Salespersons; Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand; and Waiters and Waitresses. The top five fast-growing occupations are Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software; Computer Software Engineers, Applications; Preschool Teachers; Choreographers; and Medical Assistants.
- The top 50 highest earning occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, and postsecondary education fields. Four of the top five are health occupations. Almost all high-earning occupations require bachelor's or higher degrees.
- Fast-growing or high-demand occupations are generally not high-earning. Of 35 selected high-demand, 35 selected fast-growing, and 50 selected high-earning occupations, only one high earning occupation, General and Operations Managers, is in the high-demand category. Five occupations are both high-earning and fast-growing: Computer Software Engineers, Applications; Public Relations Managers; Management Analysts; Computer Systems Analysts; and Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School.
- The most relevant skills for high-demand and fast-growing occupations are basic: active listening, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and service orientation. High-demand and high-growth occupations are also common to the leading employment sectors. Economic development should aim to diversify and strengthen the region's economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage providing industries.

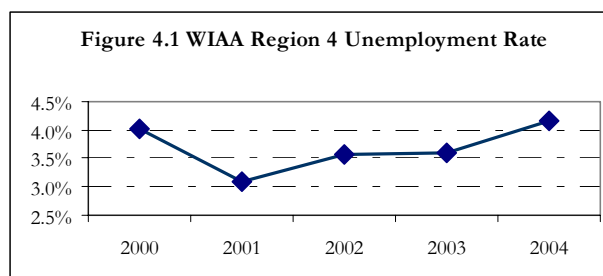
- The finding that basic skills are important—for high-demand, high-growth, and high-earning jobs—indicates a strong need for training in these skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skills as well as enhancing these basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can help identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.
- Skill and education requirements for jobs keep rising. This strongly emphasizes the need to raise educational attainment in the region and presents challenges to workforce development. It also presents opportunities for economic development through workforce development activities that involve postsecondary and higher education institutions. Higher incomes to graduates from these institutions would help to raise personal income for the region. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment for a region that has a large number of low wage jobs is an effective economic development strategy.
- A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset. Together, workforce development and economic development can provide this asset and build a strong well-diversified regional economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.

Workforce Supply

Labor Force Activity

The labor force includes all persons in the civilian noninstitutional population who are age 16 and over and who have, or are actively looking for, a job. Typically, those who have no job and are not looking for one are not included (e.g. students, retirees, and the disabled). Table 4.1 shows labor force information for Region 4 and its four counties for 2004 and August 2005. A large increase in the number of employed residents and a slight decrease in labor force size lowered unemployment rate in 2005 for the region and its counties. The labor force grew only in Shelby County.

Unemployment rates in 2004 ranged between 3.2 percent and 6.1 percent for the counties, with 4.2 percent for the region. The unemployment range in August 2005 was 2.7 percent to 4.2 percent, with a 3.2 percent rate for the region. Only Walker County had a comparable unemployment rate to the state's 4.2 percent. Annual unemployment rates for 2000 to 2004 are shown in Figure 4.1. The region's unemployment dropped to 3.1 percent in 2001 and slowly rose to 4.2



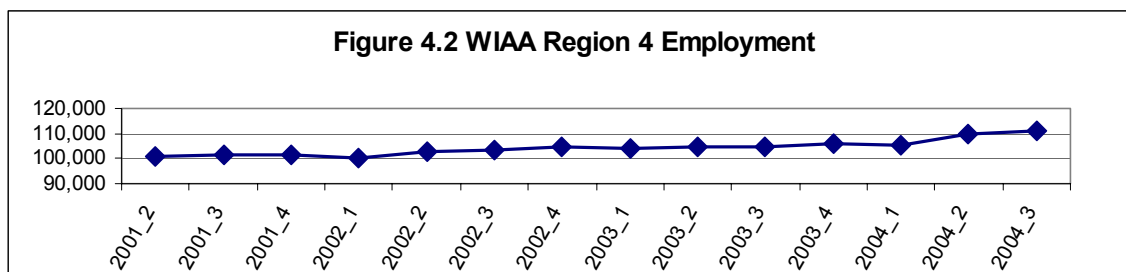
Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

percent in 2004. Employment in the region averaged 104,350 quarterly from the second quarter of 2001 to third quarter 2004 (Figure 4.2). Employment, which refers to the number of full-time and part-time jobs, has been steadily rising with increasing economic activity.

Table 4.1 WIAA Region 4 Labor Force Information

	2004			
	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Chilton	19,690	18,781	909	4.62%
Shelby	89,425	86,601	2,824	3.16%
St. Clair	32,787	31,213	1,574	4.80%
Walker	30,760	28,898	1,862	6.05%
WIAA Region 4	172,662	165,493	7,169	4.15%
Alabama	2,148,766	2,029,314	119,452	5.56%
U.S.	147,401,000	139,252,000	8,149,000	5.53%
	2005 August			
	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Chilton	19,656	18,957	699	3.56%
Shelby	89,829	87,411	2,418	2.69%
St. Clair	32,618	31,505	1,113	3.41%
Walker	30,455	29,169	1,286	4.22%
WIAA Region 4	172,558	167,042	5,516	3.20%
Alabama	2,155,745	2,065,528	90,217	4.18%
U.S.	150,469,000	143,142,000	7,327,000	4.87%

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

Commuting Patterns

In 2000, about 41,400 more people commuted out of the region for work than commuted in (Table 4.2). There was significant commuting within the region as well. Table 4.2 also shows the one-way average commute time and distance for workers in 2004; the data were collected as part of a survey on underemployment. The one-way commute takes less than 20 minutes for 53 percent of resident workers; between 20 and 40 minutes for 25 percent; and more than 40 minutes for 18 percent. About 3 percent of workers take more than an hour.

Most of the commuter outflow was into Jefferson County. More residents of St. Clair and Shelby counties worked in Jefferson than in their own counties. Net outflows to Jefferson County are almost 20,000 for Shelby and 11,500 for St. Clair.

The commute is less than 10 miles for 44 percent of workers and roughly 26 percent travel 10 to 25 miles. About 25 percent of workers travel more than 25 miles one-way, with over 6 percent exceeding 45 miles. This commuting data suggest that roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers so as to not slow economic development.

Table 4.2 WIAA Region 4 Commuting Patterns

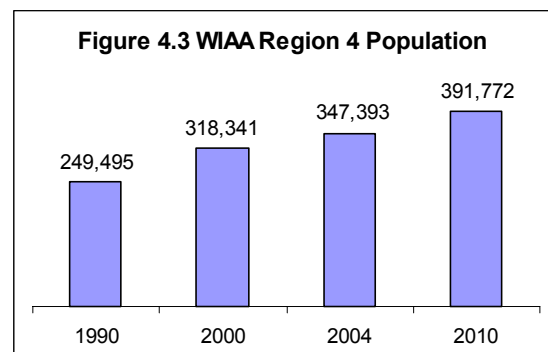
Area	Inflow, 2000		Outflow, 2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Chilton	1,556	5.2	5,275	7.4
St. Clair	3,977	13.2	15,845	22.2
Shelby	22,004	73.0	40,602	56.8
Walker	2,605	8.6	9,822	13.7
WIAA Region 4	30,142	100.0	71,544	100.0
Average commute time (one-way), 2004				
				Percent of workers
Less than 20 minutes				50.7
20 to 40 minutes				26.4
40 minutes to an hour				14.4
More than an hour				3.9
Average commute distance (one-way), 2004				
				Percent of workers
Less than 10 miles				37.7
10 to 25 miles				32.7
25 to 45 miles				14.8
More than 45 miles				8.8

Note: Rounding errors may be present.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Population

The Region 4 population estimate of about 347,400 for 2004 is 9.1 percent more than was recorded for 2000 (Figure 4.3 and Table 4.3). Shelby County led population growth with 15.6 percent, but Walker County lost residents. The region's population is projected to grow 23 percent in this decade to about 392,000 by 2010. Population will grow fastest in Shelby County and slowest in Walker County. Faster employment growth will reduce commuter outflow and place less of a burden on the region's roads. Communities that experience rapid job gains should invest in amenities and infrastructure to attract new residents.



Educational Attainment

Educational attainment of Region 4 residents who are 25 years old and over is shown below in Table 4.4 and Figures 4.4 and 4.5. Nearly 77 percent graduated from high school and 22 percent hold a bachelor's or higher degree. Shelby County stands out with almost 87 percent high school graduates and 37 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders. Educational attainment is important as skills rise with education and high wage 21st century jobs demand more skill sets.

Table 4.3 WIAA Region 4 Population

	1990 Census	2000 Census	2004 Estimate	% Change 2000-2004	2010 Projected	% Change 2000-2010
Chilton	32,458	39,593	41,466	4.7	47,398	19.7
Shelby	99,358	143,293	165,677	15.6	191,474	33.6
St. Clair	50,009	64,742	70,245	8.5	80,009	23.6
Walker	67,670	70,713	70,005	-1.0	72,891	3.1
WIAA Region 4	249,495	318,341	347,393	9.1	391,772	23.1
Alabama	4,040,587	4,447,100	4,530,182	1.9	4,838,812	8.8
U.S.	248,709,873	281,421,966	296,655,404	5.4	314,571,000	11.8

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and U.S. Census Bureau.

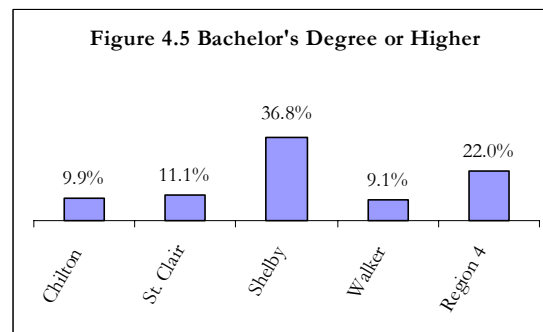
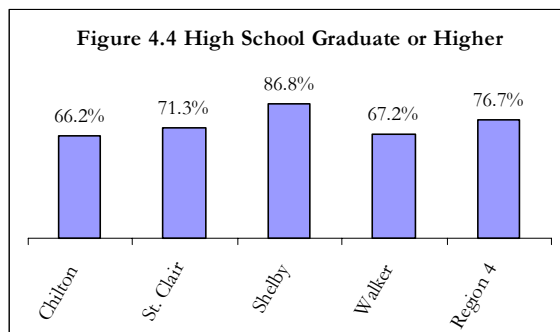


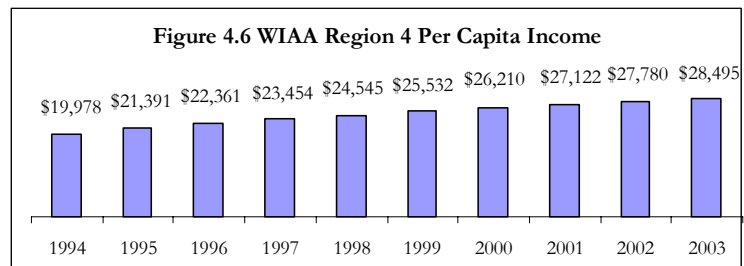
Table 4.4 Educational Attainment in 2000, Population 25 Years and Over

	Chilton	St. Clair	Shelby	Walker	Region 4
Total	25,902	43,101	94,185	47,919	211,107
No schooling completed	359	463	628	732	2,182
Nursery to 4th grade	249	309	240	412	1,210
5th and 6th grade	890	849	1,006	1,387	4,132
7th and 8th grade	1,647	2,382	1,994	3,072	9,095
9th grade	1,531	1,944	1,915	2,913	8,303
10th grade	1,652	2,284	2,242	2,733	8,911
11th grade	1,288	2,202	1,955	2,381	7,826
12th grade, no diploma	1,141	1,920	2,406	2,083	7,550
High school graduate/equivalent	9,264	14,921	21,671	16,647	62,503
Some college, less than 1yr	1,579	3,174	5,735	2,787	13,275
Some college, 1+ yrs, no degree	2,663	5,579	15,064	5,712	29,018
Associate degree	1,065	2,283	4,680	2,684	10,712
Bachelor's degree	1,530	3,251	24,080	2,566	31,427
Master's degree	713	1,125	7,246	1,382	10,466
Professional school degree	190	330	2,293	327	3,140
Doctorate degree	141	85	1,030	101	1,357

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and U.S. Census Bureau.

Per Capita Income

Per capita income (PCI) in Region 4 was at \$28,495 in 2003 (Figure 4.6), 43 percent higher than in 1994, and almost \$2,000 or 8 percent higher than the Alabama average of \$26,505. The PCI was highest in Shelby County (\$34,697); PCIs for the other counties were below the state average. Chilton County had the lowest PCI with \$21,416.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama.

Underemployment and Available Labor

Labor force data are often limited to information on the employed and the unemployed that is available from government sources. However, this information is not complete from the perspective of employers. New or expanding employers are also interested in underemployment because current workers are potential employees. In fact, experience requirements in job ads are evidence that many prospective employers look beyond the unemployed for workers.

Workers in occupations that underutilize their experience, training, and skills are underemployed. These workers might look for other work because their current earnings are below what they believe they can get or because they wish to not be underemployed. Underemployment occurs for various reasons including (i) productivity growth, (ii) spousal employment and income, and (iii) family constraints or personal preferences. The various contributing factors combined with economic, social, and geographic characteristics of areas make underemployment unique to areas.

The existence of underemployment identifies economic potential that is not being realized. It is extremely difficult to measure this economic potential because of uncertainties regarding additional income that the underemployed can bring to an area. It is clear, however, that underemployment provides opportunities for selective job creation and economic growth. A business that needs skills prevalent among the underemployed could locate in WIAAs with such workers regardless of those areas' unemployment rates. A low unemployment rate, which may falsely suggest limited labor availability, is not a hindrance to the business.

The underemployed present a significant pool of labor because they tend to respond to job opportunities that they believe are better for reasons that include (i) higher income, (ii) better benefits, (iii) better terms and conditions of employment, and (iv) better match with skills, training, and experience. The underemployed also create opportunities for entry level workers as they leave lower-paying jobs for better-paying ones. Even if their previously held positions are lost or not filled (perhaps due to low unemployment), there is economic growth in gaining higher-paying jobs. Such income growth boosts consumption, savings, and tax collections. Quantifying the size of the underemployed is a necessary first step in exploiting it for economic development, workforce training, planning, and other uses.

WIAA Region 4 had an underemployment rate of 25.2 percent in 2004. Applying this rate to August 2005 labor force data means that about 42,100 employed residents were underemployed (Table 4.5). Adding the unemployed gives a total available labor pool of about 47,600 for the region. This pool is 8.6 times the number of unemployed and is a more realistic measure of the available labor in the region. However, prospective employers must be prepared to offer the underemployed higher wages, better terms of employment, or some other incentives to induce them to change jobs. Underemployment ranged from 20 percent for Shelby County to 31.3 percent for St. Clair. Shelby County has the largest available labor and Chilton County has the smallest.

Table 4.5 Available Labor in WIAA Region 4

	<u>Region 4</u>	<u>Chilton</u>	<u>Shelby</u>	<u>St. Clair</u>	<u>Walker</u>
Labor Force	172,558	19,656	89,829	32,618	30,455
Employed	167,042	18,957	87,411	31,505	29,169
Underemployment rate	25.2%	24.7%	20.0%	31.3%	25.8%
Underemployed workers	42,095	4,682	17,482	9,861	7,526
Unemployed	5,516	699	2,418	1,113	1,286
Available labor pool	47,611	5,381	19,900	10,974	8,812

Note: Rounding errors may be present. Based on August 2005 labor force data and 2004 underemployment rates.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Workforce Demand

Industry Mix

The retail trade sector was the leading employer with roughly 15,000 jobs in the second quarter of 2004 (Table 4.6). Rounding up the top five industries by employment are manufacturing; health care and social assistance; educational services; and accommodation and food services. These five industries provided 54,813 jobs, 51 percent of the region total. The average monthly wage across all industries in the region was \$2,850. Of the leading employers, only manufacturing paid more than this average. The highest average monthly wages were for utilities (\$6,248), finance and insurance (\$4,388), and mining (\$4,335). Accommodation and food services paid the least at \$1,150. Utilities also had the highest average monthly new hire wages with \$4,312, followed by mining with \$4,148. Accommodation and food services paid the least average monthly new hire wages with \$827.

By broad industry classification, service producing industries provided about 75 percent of all covered jobs in the region in second quarter 2004 (Figure 4.7). Goods producing industries were next with 21 percent and public administration 4 percent.

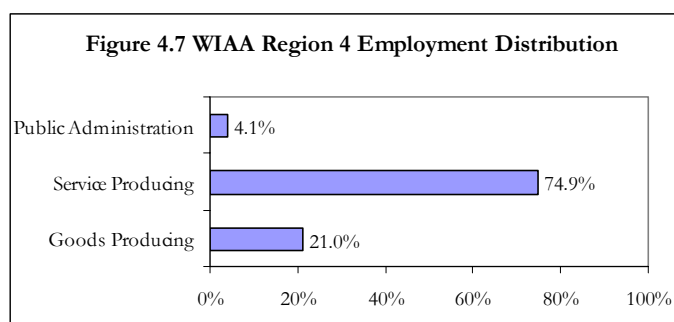


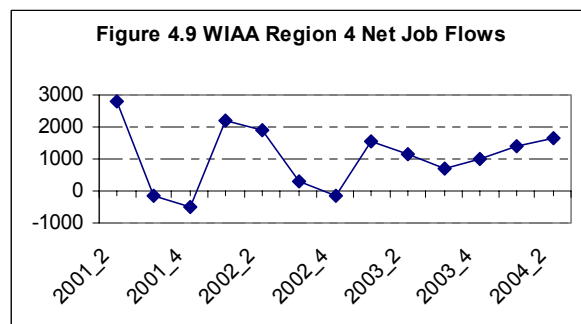
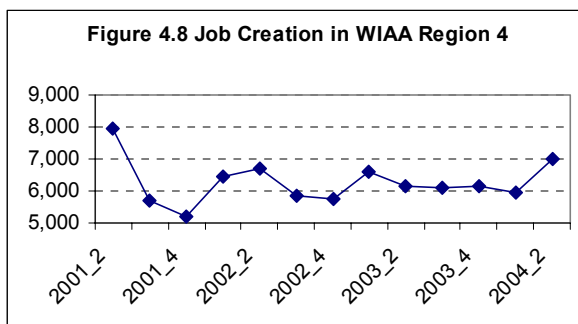
Table 4.6 Industry Mix (2nd Quarter 2004)

Industry by 2-digit NAICS Code	Total Employment	Share	Rank	Average Monthly Wage	Average Monthly New Hire Earnings
11 Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	647	0.61%	20	\$2,717	\$2,095
21 Mining	701	0.66%	19	\$4,335	\$4,148
22 Utilities	2,324	2.18%	14	\$6,248	\$4,312
23 Construction	8,377	7.87%	6	\$2,988	\$2,295
31-33 Manufacturing	12,649	11.88%	2	\$3,056	\$2,300
42 Wholesale Trade	7,246	6.81%	7	\$3,956	\$2,582
44-45 Retail Trade	14,987	14.08%	1	\$1,997	\$1,384
48-49 Transportation and Warehousing	1,574	1.48%	15	\$2,736	\$2,337
51 Information	2,601	2.44%	13	\$3,485	\$2,525
52 Finance and Insurance	7,133	6.70%	8	\$4,388	\$2,800
53 Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,399	1.31%	16	\$3,029	\$1,648
54 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5,446	5.11%	9	\$4,069	\$2,836
55 Management of Companies and Enterprises	967	0.91%	17	\$3,863	\$2,508
56 Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	4,999	4.70%	10	\$2,255	\$1,622
61 Educational Services	8,863	8.32%	4	\$2,522	\$1,313
62 Health Care and Social Assistance	9,767	9.17%	3	\$2,491	\$1,753
71 Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	783	0.74%	18	\$1,589	\$1,114
72 Accommodation and Food Services	8,547	8.03%	5	\$1,150	\$827
81 Other Services (except Public Administration)	3,068	2.88%	12	\$2,332	\$1,753
92 Public Administration	4,394	4.13%	11	\$2,479	\$1,531
ALL INDUSTRIES	106,472	100.00%		\$2,850	

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

Job Creation and Net Job Flows

On average, 6,273 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004 (Figure 4.8). Quarterly net job flows averaged 1,068 in the same period (Figure 4.9). Net job flows have ranged from a loss of 500 to a gain of about 2,800. Job creation refers to the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or through the expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.



Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

High-Demand Occupations

Table 4.7 shows the top 35 of more than 440 occupations ranked by projected demand for jobs. Many of these occupations are common to the top five employment sectors identified earlier: retail trade; manufacturing; health care and social assistance; educational services; and accommodation and food services. Thus these sectors will continue to dominate employment in the region. The top five high-demand occupations are Cashiers; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Retail Salespersons; Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand; and Waiters and Waitresses.

Table 4.7 Selected High-Demand Occupations (Base Year 2002 & Projected Year 2012)

Occupation	Annual Average Job Openings		
	Total	Due to Growth	Due to Separations
Cashiers	315	90	225
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers	205	90	115
Retail Salespersons	195	70	125
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	190	90	100
Waiters and Waitresses	170	65	105
General and Operations Managers	135	70	65
Teacher Assistants**	115	80	35
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	110	25	85
Office Clerks, General	110	55	55
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education**	100	65	35
Sales Representatives, Except Technical and Scientific Products	95	50	45
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	95	60	35
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	90	45	45
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids	85	50	35
Registered Nurses	85	55	30
Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	80	35	45
First-Line Supervisors/Managers, Retail Sales	80	40	40
Child Care Workers**	80	45	35
Team Assemblers	70	45	25
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special Education**	70	40	30
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	65	35	30
Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	60	25	35
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	60	40	20
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	55	40	15
Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	55	30	25
Customer Service Representatives	55	35	20
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	55	35	20
Counter and Rental Clerks	55	25	30
Receptionists and Information Clerks**	50	35	15
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Office and Administrative Support Workers	50	25	25
Middle School Teachers, Except Special Education**	45	30	15
Bus Drivers, School**	45	30	15
Electricians	45	30	15
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	45	25	20
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	45	20	25

Note: A minimum of 45 average annual job openings is used as selection criterion and data are rounded to nearest 5.

** Qualify as both high-demand and fast-growing occupations.

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Fast-Growing Occupations

The top 35 of occupations ranked by projected growth of employment are listed in Table 4.8. More than half of these occupations are in education, computer, and health or health support. The top five fast-growing occupations are Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software; Computer Software Engineers, Applications; Preschool Teachers; Choreographers; and Medical Assistants. Seven occupations are both high-demand and fast-growing: Receptionists and Information Clerks; Teacher Assistants; Middle School Teachers; Elementary School Teachers; Secondary School Teachers; Bus Drivers, School; and Child Care Workers. The teaching occupations listed do not include special education.

Table 4.8 Selected Fast-Growing Occupations (Base Year 2002 & Projected Year 2012)

Occupation	Employment		Percent Change	Annual Growth (Percent)	Total Annual Average Job Openings
	2002	2012			
Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software	***	***	***	***	***
Computer Software Engineers, Applications	130	250	92.3	6.76	15
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	300	540	80.0	6.05	30
Choreographers	90	160	77.8	5.92	10
Medical Assistants	120	210	75.0	5.76	10
Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	130	220	69.2	5.40	15
Management Analysts	260	430	65.4	5.16	20
Home Health Aides	370	610	64.9	5.13	30
Computer Support Specialists	300	490	63.3	5.03	25
Directors, Religious Activities and Education	250	400	60.0	4.81	20
Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors	190	300	57.9	4.67	15
Dental Assistants	190	300	57.9	4.67	15
Public Relations Managers	180	280	55.6	4.52	15
Computer Systems Analysts	220	340	54.5	4.45	15
Clergy	460	700	52.2	4.29	35
Personal and Home Care Aides	260	390	50.0	4.14	20
Educational, Vocational, and School Counselors	120	180	50.0	4.14	10
Amusement and Recreation Attendants	100	150	50.0	4.14	10
Vocational Education Teachers, Secondary School	140	210	50.0	4.14	10
Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	220	330	50.0	4.14	15
Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education	220	330	50.0	4.14	15
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	410	610	48.8	4.05	25
Receptionists and Information Clerks**	680	1,010	48.5	4.04	50
Teacher Assistants**	1,610	2,390	48.4	4.03	115
Middle School Teachers, Except Special Education**	600	890	48.3	4.02	45
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education**	1,310	1,940	48.1	4.00	100
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special Education**	870	1,280	47.1	3.94	70
Special Education Teachers, Preschool, Kindergarten, and Elementary	170	250	47.1	3.93	15
Bus Drivers, School**	600	880	46.7	3.90	45
Pharmacy Technicians	390	570	46.2	3.87	20
Bill and Account Collectors	260	380	46.2	3.87	15
Social and Human Service Assistants	240	350	45.8	3.85	777
Welding, Soldering, and Brazing Machine Setters and Operators	110	160	45.5	3.82	10
Child Care Workers**	1,050	1,520	44.8	3.77	80
Rehabilitation Counselors	90	130	44.4	3.75	5

Note: Selection criterion is annual growth rate of at least 3.75 percent. Employment level data are rounded to the nearest 10 and job openings data are rounded to the nearest 5.

** Qualify as both high-demand and fast-growing occupations.

*** The data for these occupations are confidential using Bureau of Labor Statistics standards.

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

High-Earning Occupations

Any discussion of earnings must consider that wages vary with experience. Occupations with the highest entry wages may not necessarily have the highest average or experienced wages. Table 4.9 shows 50 selected highest earning occupations in the region. The selected high-earning occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, and postsecondary education fields. The selected high-earning occupations are generally not fast-growing or high-demand. One occupation, General and Operations Managers, is both high-earning and high-demand. Five occupations are both high-earning and fast-growing: Computer Software Engineers, Applications; Public Relations Managers; Management Analysts; Computer Systems Analysts; and Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School.

Other Workforce Issues

Available Labor

The availability of labor is critical to economic development. WIAA Region 4 currently has a low unemployment rate, but it also has a 47,600-strong available labor pool that is looking for better jobs, typically higher-wage ones. This pool is made up of 42,100 underemployed and 5,500 unemployed. The region's underemployed workers are willing to commute farther and longer; 48 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 41 percent for 20 or more extra miles.

A lack of job opportunities in their areas and low wages at the available jobs are the primary reasons given for being underemployed. Retirement and disability are the primary reasons given for not working, but a lack of job opportunities is also mentioned frequently. Some nonworkers may become part of the labor force if their problems can be addressed. Economic development efforts should take these factors into consideration.

Employment is growing faster than the labor force. Higher employment demand could reduce commuter outflow and presents communities with opportunities to attract new residents. Some communities must be prepared to invest in amenities and infrastructure to support such growth because immigration is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting.

Immigration is one way of growing the labor force through growth in the population. The region's population growth rate is much better than the state's rate and this is expected to continue through 2010. Another strategy to expand the labor force to meet increasing employment demand is to focus on hard-to-serve populations, which include persons in poverty, those receiving welfare, those in sparsely populated areas, those on active parole, and out-of-school youth. These people are often outside of the mainstream economy and poor. They usually have difficulty finding work because they have low levels of educational attainment, lack occupational skills, or face geographic or other barriers. Some investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap these potential workers. This strategy will raise labor force participation and may be very effective given the region's low population growth rate.

Table 4.9 Selected High-Earning Occupations

Occupation	Mean Annual Salary (\$)
Anesthesiologists	196,976
Surgeons	180,856
Family and General Practitioners	146,370
Chief Executives	135,304
Dentists, General	134,410
Law Teachers, Postsecondary	111,970
Lawyers	106,933
Engineering Managers	96,200
Computer and Information Scientists, Research	90,459
Natural Sciences Managers	88,795
Personal Financial Advisors	88,046
General and Operations Managers	85,821
Aerospace Engineers	84,344
Pharmacists	83,075
Chiropractors	82,514
Optometrists	81,806
Computer and Information Systems Managers	81,078
Marketing Managers	79,435
Computer Hardware Engineers	79,414
Sales Managers	78,957
Electronics Engineers, Except Computer	78,686
Environmental Engineers	76,960
Financial Managers	76,003
Materials Engineers	73,382
Medical and Health Services Managers	72,925
Purchasing Managers	72,488
Engineering Teachers, Postsecondary	72,320
Computer Software Engineers, Applications	71,698
Education Administrators, Postsecondary	69,618
Industrial Production Managers	69,056
Management Analysts	68,806
Veterinarians	68,619
Construction Managers	67,163
Computer Programmers	66,789
Physics Teachers, Postsecondary	65,710
Computer Systems Analysts	65,250
Industrial Engineers	65,125
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	64,979
Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	64,480
Financial Examiners	63,794
Health and Safety Engineers, Except Mining Safety Engineers and Inspectors	63,502
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists	63,253
Civil Engineers	63,190
Business Teachers, Postsecondary	63,170
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Non-Retail Sales Workers	63,149
Economists	62,005
Physical Therapists	61,714
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	61,630
Public Relations Managers	60,944
Broadcast News Analysts	60,944

Note: The list of occupations is specific to the region, but earnings are statewide. Only the 50 highest earning single occupations are presented. The list does not include occupations that are affected by confidentiality. Some high-earning occupational groups are not listed because earnings can vary considerably for occupations within these groups. Employment data are rounded to the nearest 10. The data provided are based on the November 2004 release of the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) combined employment and wage file. Estimates for specific occupations may include imputed data.

"NA" indicates data items that are not publishable or not available.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Skills

Jobs require skill sets and it is necessary that jobholders have the relevant skills. High earning occupations typically require more complex skills, which are obtained in the pursuit of the high educational attainment levels that such jobs require. Low earning occupations require fewer and more basic skill sets; some low earning occupations have no minimum skill set requirements (e.g. dishwashers and maids).

Table 4.10 shows the percentage of selected occupations in WIAA Region 4 that list a particular skill as primary. We define a primary skill as one in the top 10 of the required skill set for an occupation. O*NET Online provides skill sets for all occupations ranked by the degree of importance. Thus primary skills are more important than other skills. It is important to note that a particular skill may be more important and more extensively used in one occupation than another. Table 4.10 does not address such cross-occupational skill importance comparisons.

In general, basic skills are most frequently listed as primary. Science and critical thinking skills are primary for more selected high-earning occupations than selected fast-growing and selected high-demand occupations. A similar pattern holds for complex problem solving, resource management, and systems skills; these skills require longer training periods and postsecondary education. The high-demand and high-growth occupations in the region are dominated by occupations such as Cashiers; Retail Salespersons; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; and Waiters and Waitresses. The most relevant skills for such occupations are active listening, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and service orientation.

Education and Training Issues

Educational attainment in WIAA Region 4 is above that of the state. Seventy-seven percent of residents age 25 and over have graduated from high school and 22 percent have bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 75 percent and 19 percent, respectively, for Alabama. Shelby County stands out with 87 percent high school graduates and 37 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders; the other counties have lower educational attainment than the state. Education and skill requirements for jobs keep rising and emphasize a strong need to raise educational attainment in the region.

Table 4.11 shows the number of selected occupations in the region for which a particular education/training category is most common. In general, high-earning occupations typically require a bachelor's or higher degree. Most of the high-demand jobs do not require postsecondary training, but more than half of fast-growing jobs do. Some form of on-the-job training is the minimum requirement for most high-demand occupations. The challenge for the region is that future jobs are likely to require some postsecondary education and training.

The finding that basic skills are important for all the selected occupations (Table 4.10) indicates a strong need for training in these skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skill types while enhancing basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can point out the skill needs of the future and any existing gaps.

Table 4.10 Share of Selected Occupations for Which Skill Is Primary

	Selected High-Demand Occupations	Selected Fast-Growing Occupations	Selected High-Earning Occupations
Basic Skills			
Active Learning	34%	57%	68%
Active Listening	77%	83%	84%
Critical Thinking	57%	63%	90%
Learning Strategies	31%	51%	16%
Mathematics	26%	9%	36%
Monitoring	40%	43%	38%
Reading Comprehension	71%	86%	94%
Science	0%	0%	32%
Speaking	69%	83%	74%
Writing	37%	54%	48%
Complex Problem Solving Skills			
Complex Problem Solving	3%	14%	36%
Resource Management Skills			
Management of Financial Resources	3%	0%	14%
Management of Material Resources	3%	0%	4%
Management of Personnel Resources	9%	3%	18%
Time Management	46%	60%	50%
Social Skills			
Coordination	26%	29%	30%
Instructing	34%	60%	28%
Negotiation	6%	3%	14%
Persuasion	6%	3%	14%
Service Orientation	34%	43%	14%
Social Perceptiveness	49%	69%	16%
Systems Skills			
Judgment and Decision Making	14%	17%	64%
Systems Analysis	0%	9%	10%
Systems Evaluation	3%	3%	16%
Technical Skills			
Equipment Maintenance	14%	9%	0%
Equipment Selection	14%	6%	6%
Installation	11%	3%	0%
Operation and Control	9%	3%	4%
Operation Monitoring	9%	6%	2%
Operations Analysis	0%	9%	18%
Programming	0%	6%	6%
Quality Control Analysis	3%	3%	4%
Repairing	11%	3%	0%
Technology Design	0%	6%	8%
Troubleshooting	11%	14%	10%
Note: Definitions for skill types and skills are available at http://online.onetcenter.org/skills/			
Source: O*NET Online and Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama.			

Table 4.11 Number of Selected Occupations with Most Common Education/Training Requirement

Most Common Education/Training Requirements Categories	Selected High-Demand Occupations	Selected Fast-Growing Occupations	Selected High-Earning Occupations
First Professional Degree		1	10
Doctoral Degree			4
Master's Degree		2	3
Work Experience Plus a Bachelor's or Higher Degree	1	4	15
Bachelor's Degree	3	9	15
Associate Degree	1	1	
Postsecondary Vocational Training	2	2	
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	2	1	2
Long-term On-the-job Training	1	1	
Moderate On-the-job Training	8	5	1
Short-term On-the-job Training	17	9	

Note: The last three education and training requirements categories are based on the length of time it generally takes an average worker to achieve proficiency for occupations in which postsecondary training is usually not needed for entry. **Long-term** requires more than 12 months on-the-job training that can include up to four years of apprenticeship, formal classroom instruction, and short-term employer-sponsored training. Trainees are generally considered to be employed in the occupation. **Moderate-term** requires one to 12 months on-the-job experience and informal training. **Short-term** requires up to one month on-the-job experience and training.

Source: O*NET Online; Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama; and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

High-earning occupations make up a small component of total employment and jobs offered by top employers in the region. Diversifying the region's economy would strengthen it. Economic development should also focus on retaining, expanding, and attracting businesses that provide more high-earning jobs. Workforce development should pay attention to postsecondary and higher educational systems to ensure a ready and available workforce for these businesses. The higher incomes to graduates of these institutions would help raise personal income for the region. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment and technological skills for a region that has a large number of low wage jobs is an effective economic development strategy.

A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset. Together, workforce development and economic development can provide this asset and build a strong well-diversified regional economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.

Regional Advisory Council Annual Report: Implications for Action

The material in this section is from the July 2005 Annual Report of the Region 4 Workforce Development Regional Advisory Council. It does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the direct contributors to this workforce report.

Action issue 1. Where must education and training opportunities be advanced or marketed to meet the demands of critical skills/worker shortages and high-growth occupations in the region?

Walker County. Short-term certificate programs that provide technical skills will certainly be the answer to providing a skilled workforce. Keeping the training current with demand will also help the workforce stay on top.

Shelby County. There continues to be a need in Shelby County to enhance employee skills related

to work ethic, attitude, team work, and literacy. Programs should be implemented to train workers that are moving into positions recently vacated by employees transferring to higher paying positions in the automotive sector. There should also be emphasis on identifying those workers that are underemployed (working in jobs below their skill level) so they can advance into better jobs.

St. Clair County. We are contacting guidance counselors and principals at our schools and business and industry.

Chilton County. Working with the Board of Education in offering Career Day for our high school seniors. Working with high school counselors and principals and working closely with HR officers in existing industries.

Action issue 2. How can/should worker skills be generally upgraded in the region?

Walker County. Community colleges are in position to provide the much needed certificate programs and this type of training will be the key to workforce enhancement. However, funding for these programs must be provided to get targeted groups back into the labor force. Recruitment will be important as well and long-term mentoring may also be necessary to maintain the steady flow of students. Career Center programs such as workshops that teach job obtainment and retention skills will be important. Career Centers will also be in position to recruit and provide information, access, and connections to the jobs and the training.

Shelby County. There should be programs in place to focus on basic manufacturing skills (i.e. forklift operations, blueprint reading, and plant safety). There is also a focus on training for fabrication and assembly and industrial maintenance. Institutions such as schools of technology, skills centers, and community colleges should work together with new and expanding industries to coordinate training programs required by existing employers.

St. Clair County. More training and better facilities.

Chilton County. Working with local educators to get more students into technical school.

Action issue 3. How can future workers be helped to make better choices about career preparation?

Walker County. Career exploration opportunities for high school students will be important and should include representatives of the automotive industry and the science/technology fields. Focus on math and science subjects in K-12 to meet the increasing need for workers in these fields. In addition, Summer Technology camps and field trips to industry as well as career/technical programs help enhance interest in business/industrial careers.

Shelby County. There should be a more effective linkage between existing employers and training programs. By enhancing this relationship, the companies can clearly identify those jobs facing critical shortages and influence the educational system in responding to those needs. Enhancement of internships, job shadowing, etc. will also encourage the linkage between existing employers and training/education institutions.

St. Clair County. Visiting schools, civic organizations, and giving good public relations.

Chilton County. By visiting schools, civic organizations, and making people aware of the preparation needed for a local work force.

Action issue 4. Should worker assessment and credentialing be increased in the region (pre-service and in-service training)?

Walker County. Yes

Shelby County. Yes

St. Clair County. Yes. There should be more awareness of the demand for workers in the schools and organizations.

Chilton County. Yes. Local schools and organizations should be made more aware of opportunities in the local work force.

Action issue 5. What roles should be played by the various stakeholder groups (employers, partner agencies, elected officials, faith-based/ community-based organizations, Workforce Investment Board members, grantor agencies, news media, vendors/ contractors) at the local, regional, state and federal levels in implementing the action steps outlined above?

Walker County. Employers should have significant input into the Career/Tech programs in order to have their needs met. Industry recruiters should have a direct link to school systems and have access to students. Partner agencies such as the Employment Service and CareerLink can assist in career exploration activities and provide occupation statistics and data, as well as interacting with employers to determine needs.

WorkKeys—a component of the ACT System—and KeyTrain®—a WorkKeys approved training system—have and will play a major role in the development of a more skilled workforce.

Shelby County. Employers—There should be more interaction between employers and local training/educational institutions to share information about employment needs.

Elected Officials—They should be familiar with training programs within their jurisdiction and provide assistance to coordinate employers and training opportunities.

St. Clair County. We have facilities and instructors to train. There needs to be more communication between schools, elected officials, and businesses.

Chilton County. There needs to be more communication between elected officials, businesses, and employers.